

**William C. Audette
1264 Ridgeview Circle
Lake Orion, Michigan 48362**

Comments to the Committee for Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources

September 15, 2009

RE: SB0164, Crossbow Permit for Persons having a temporary medical disability

Good Morning.

My name is Bill Audette and I am a resident of Lake Orion, Michigan. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my thoughts on SB0164, a bill that would allow the Department of Natural Resources to issue a permit authorizing the taking of game with a crossbow by a person who is temporarily disabled. As a person who has had a permanent medical disability the greater part of my life and, who already hunts with a crossbow, I am unaffected by this proposed legislation. However, I support any proactive measure that will create additional hunter opportunity, so long as it does have a negative effect on the resource. In this instance, just like the permit that allows individuals having a permanent medical disability, SB0164 will provide even more people with the opportunity to participate as an equal in the same activity. However, while I support this bill in principle, I strongly urge this committee to focus upon this issue from a totally different perspective versus adding to an endless litany of policy effecting unique subsets of the hunter universe as it relates to the crossbow.

As you will certainly recall, on June 19, 2008, the House of Representatives passed HB5741, a bill that would repeal the law against using a crossbow during the archery season and thereby allow for full inclusion of the crossbow throughout the entire State of Michigan. The vote was an astonishing 94 in favor, and 14 against. Regrettably, the bill was not taken up by the Senate before the end of the session and these matters were then taken up by the NRC—and... we all know what happened next.

In retrospect, members of the House recognized in June 2008, the obvious benefits that will accrue to the State of Michigan and its citizens from full inclusion of the crossbow. The benefits include recruiting and retaining hunters, consumer spending, commerce and tourism, generating much needed income through incremental license sales, sales tax, fuel tax, excise tax. Similarly, the House vote assured that Michigan stay competitive with virtually every one of its neighbors that allow for full inclusion of the crossbow including Ohio, Ontario and most recently, Pennsylvania.

Those benefits remain as solid today as they were last year. Yet, when the House voted last June, it did so with the most critical part of the equation not provided to it by our own in-state experts, specifically: what effect this decision would have upon the resource itself? For whatever reason, this key information had yet to be determined and/or simply was not in the public domain. And without it, there was still an element of doubt within the minds of even those who were in favor of its passage despite the profound benefits that I just recited.

In January of this year, in response to the Natural Resources Commission taking up this same issue, Wildlife Conservation Order #2 was submitted by the DNR. Contained in this memorandum is perhaps the most profoundly important single sentence of the entire dialogue surrounding crossbow expansion over the last 50 years. It reads:

“The Wildlife Division has stated that the use of crossbows would not have a detrimental effect on wildlife populations.”

Once published, I immediately confirmed with Director Humphries’ office that this sentence was indeed scribed in the context of all of the State of Michigan’s hunting seasons and, not merely in some other, limited context.

To the rational, thinking person, this can mean only one thing; science has been satisfied! One would therefore conclude that the next logical step would have been to craft policy that reconciles this declaration by providing hunter opportunity of an equal measure. And as always in these types of matters, political and social considerations should be moot.

Regrettably, the NRC failed to live up to its obligation that requires it, as a body, to manage our resources based solely on sound scientific principals, as is required by Proposal G. What was approved last March was a seemingly disconnected and arbitrary mishmash of policy, leaving even those totally opposed to crossbow expansion in disbelief. They are:

- Zone 3: Full inclusion of the crossbow during any hunting season (age 12, while statewide, guns are permitted starting at 10)
- Zone 1 and 2: Crossbows permitted only to those age 50 and greater
- Zone 1 and 2: Full inclusion of the crossbow but, only during the early archery season
- All zones: crossbow arrow speed is limited to maximum 350 feet-per-second (no restrictions on other archery equipment)

Today, we are setting out to create accommodations for yet another subset of the crossbow hunter universe. If you really think about this bill, the obvious question that comes to mind is; “How many people would spend hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of dollars on a crossbow and all its peripherals, only to be able to use them for a short time until the temporary condition goes away?”

Chairman Sheltroun, it is time for the Legislature to retake the lead and complete the work it started in June, 2008. It’s time to correct the harebrained social and political criteria interwoven into the crossbow policy established by the NRC last March. Its time to march forward-- now armed with the indisputable statement from our own DNR that crossbows will not have a negative effect on wildlife populations--- in any and all venues!

Again, I support this bill in principle. It is a noble gesture. It is also, patently unnecessary! I say this not in as opinion or bias, but rather, in light of what our own DNR has now told us—"There will be no negative effect upon the resource". End of story!

Chairman Sheltroun, I strongly recommend that you amend SB0164 to allow for full inclusion of the crossbow during those seasons where other archery equipment is permitted and return it to the Senate as such. Only then, can the *entire* State of Michigan and *ALL* of its citizens realize the benefits that can, and will, accrue to it.

Thank you.